
FARKAS RESIDENCE

3547 ST. GAUDENS ROAD

Final Designation Report



Historic and Environmental Preservation Board



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE
3547 ST. GAUDENS ROAD
AS A HISTORIC SITE

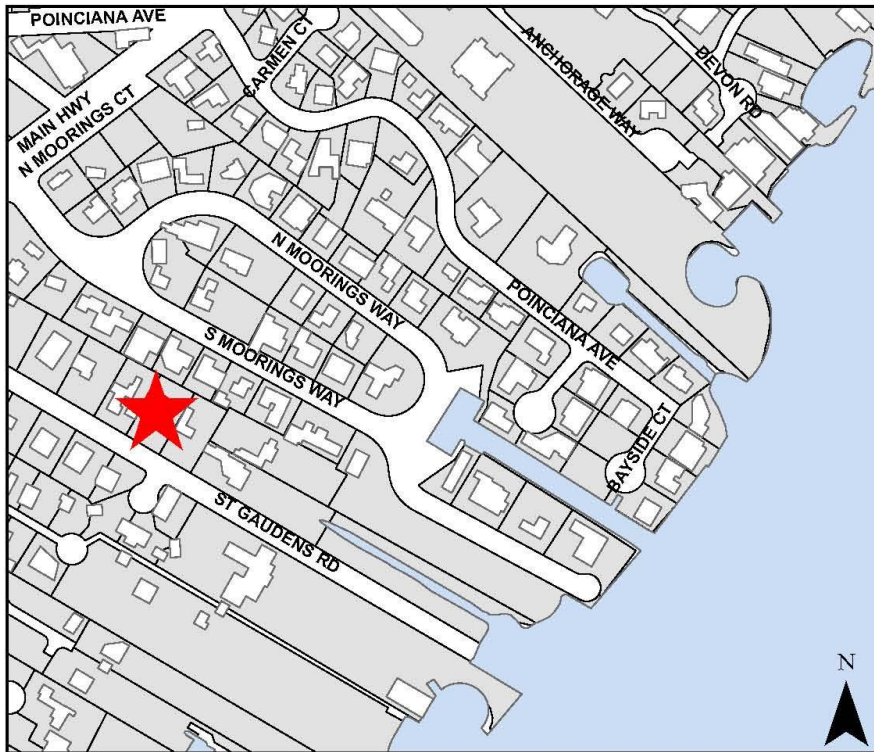
Prepared By: Trisha Logan
Historic Preservation Planner

Reviewed By: Megan Cross Schmitt
Historic Preservation Officer

Passed and Adopted On:

Resolution Number:

3547 St. Gaudens Road



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I- General Information

Historic Name:

3547 St. Gaudens Road

Current Name:

Farkas Residence

Date of Construction:

1924

Location:

3547 St. Gaudens Road
Miami, Florida 33133

Present Owner:

Georgette F. Ballance
3547 St. Gaudens Road
Miami, Florida 33133

Present use:

Private Residential

Zoning:

T3-R/NCD-3

Folio No.:

01-4128-008-0070

Boundary (Legal Description):

The Justison and Frantz PB 6-20 Lot 7 and prop int in and to common elements
not dedicated to public lot size site value or 17448-0422 1196 4

Setting:

The home is located on St. Gaudens Road, between Main Highway and
Biscayne Bay

Integrity:

The home has not been subject to major alterations on the exterior and retains a
high level of integrity.

II- Statement of Significance

Architect: Dwight James Baum

Constructed in 1924, the home located at 3547 St. Gaudens Road, was originally built for Miss Elizabeth Slade. Miss Slade was a northerner who had previously visited the area and stayed at Biscayne Camp prior to investing in land along St. Gaudens Road. She was associated with the Saint Gaudens family, both from the same town of Cornish, New Hampshire.

The most notable owners of the property, George and Klara Farkas, purchased the home in the 1940s. George was an architect, interior designer, and industrial designer known for his fabric and furniture designs and Klara was an award winning photographer who was highly involved throughout Coconut Grove.

As part of the early 1920s development boom, the home represents a significant time in Miami's development progress. This era in Coconut Grove partially owes the reason and direction of its growth, particularly in the southern portion of the area, to the Sunshine Fruits Company which subdivided the land and welcomed new land owners to the area.

Coconut Grove

Coconut Grove is a uniquely situated area along Biscayne Bay, and its incorporation predated the story of the City of Miami. The settlement of Coconut Grove began in 1846 when it was first surveyed and it flourished even further once the United States implemented the "Homestead Act" in 1862, granting 160 acres of land to men willing to live on the land for at least five years.

One of the most prominent early citizens of Coconut Grove, Ralph Munroe, was a resident of Staten Island, New York. Munroe began visiting the area in 1877 and then encouraged his friends to visit and even move to Coconut Grove, a location that was growing both touristically and agriculturally. In 1910, a booklet was published by the Coconut Grove Development Company, Inc. as a way to specifically entice wealthy northerners to move to and invest in Coconut Grove. The booklet included detailed information pertaining to the climate, landscape, the ability to grow certain fruits, as well as the description of costs to construct a home and profits to be made through the sale of land and fruits. Also included are several "questions and answers" as well as letters from visitors and residents to further entice interest in the area.

Due to these efforts and the overall attractiveness of the area, Coconut Grove prospered and was incorporated as its own city from 1919 until 1925, when it was then annexed to the City of Miami. In these early years, the area experienced

exponential growth with the construction of residential homes, a number of large estates, as well as the formation of the downtown core.

3547 St. Gaudens Road was initially part of Ewanton Heights, a subdivision that was platted in 1894 by J.W. Ewan. "In 1883 Ewan had purchased from the United States government a patent for a one hundred and sixty acre homestead"¹, initially subdividing the area into large lots along Biscayne Bay where estates were primarily constructed as winter residences by wealthy northern industrialists.

The Sunshine Fruits Company

With a growing interest in farming in the Coconut Grove area, there became a need for caretakers of groves for absentee owners. Sunshine Fruits Company was founded in 1910 to partially fill this role of owning, operating, and managing fruit groves where a primary interest was in growing a variety of citrus, avocados, and mangoes.² Soon thereafter an interest in real estate and property development was incorporated into the original business. The first real estate venture was in 1912 with the subdivision of lots on Bayview Road.

A small home, now known as the Sunshine Fruits Company Inn, was acquired in 1915 to host prospective clients for the expanding real estate business. The real estate firm sold the Inn in the mid-1920s, it continued operation until the mid-1980s and is now a private residence.

By the late teens, the Sunshine Fruits Company also operated the Sunshine Villas as one of their initial developments. Sunshine Villas were furnished cottages, located just east of the Inn along present day St. Gaudens Road and Bayview Road that visitors could rent. They were advertised as "Furnished Bungalows" with "all conveniences" including "electric lights, baths, hot and cold water, screened porches and fireplaces"³ situated near Biscayne Bay.

Justison and Frantz Subdivision

3547 St. Gaudens Road is associated with the overall transformation of Coconut Grove during the 1920s, in particular with early developers, Harold deBussy Justison and Albert William Frantz. Justison and Frantz were partners in the Sunshine Fruits Company, an organization that was "instrumental in bringing many people of importance to Coconut Grove."⁴ Coconut Grove experienced exponential growth at this time, and became incorporated as its own city for a

¹ "Sunshine Fruits Historic District" Designation Report, author and unknown.

² Dorn, Harold W. "Mango Growing Around Early Miami." Tequesta pp. 37

³ Coconut Grove City Directly, 1925

⁴ Well Established Real Estate Firm had a Novel Origin, *The Miami Daily Metropolis*, March 3, 1923

period of five years. During this brief period of time, Justison served as the City's fourth and final mayor.

The Sunshine Fruits Company began subdividing lots in the Ewanton Heights Subdivision, renaming this section the Justison and Frantz Subdivision. Originally named Ozone Avenue, St. Gaudens Road was named for the Saint-Gaudens family⁵ who held an estate at the end of the street extending to Biscayne Bay, now 3500 St. Gaudens Road. The renaming occurred early on, as by 1926 Miami's City Directory referred to the street as St. Gaudens Road.⁶

Prior to the development of St. Gaudens Road, these developers were also responsible for the subdivision of Entrada, Sunshine Villas, and Bayview Road. Bayview Road was the first of their real estate ventures when the land was purchased from Dr. John C. Gifford, the first American to hold a doctorate in Forestry, in 1912. The Bayview Road Subdivision actually included a portion of what is now St. Gaudens Road.

Dwight James Baum

Primarily focused on development in the Greater New York City region and within Sarasota, Florida, architect Dwight James Baum is responsible for the design of the residence located at 3547 St. Gaudens Road.

Baum grew up in Little Falls, New York and was the son of a shoe salesman. He attended Syracuse University from 1905 to 1909 to pursue his Bachelors in Architecture. After graduation he worked for several small architecture firms and then started his own company in 1915. During the beginning of his career Baum was inspired by Fieldstone, a development in the Bronx that was spurred by Edward Delafield where he became a major contributor to the residential designs. Over a period of 25 years, Baum designed over 140 residences in the neighborhood with varying styles that included Tudor, Dutch, and Mediterranean. It was noted in the monograph of Baum's work that his designs, "were uniformly distinguished by their expert handling of mass and scale, impeccable craftsmanship and fine detailing, and integration of every imaginable modern convenience in an increasingly servant-less age."⁷

Most notably, Baum contributed to the architecture in Sarasota, Florida beginning with a commission from John Ringling of the Ringling Brothers Circus in 1924. He was tasked with crafting a mansion for the Ringling family, "A highly romantic interpretation of an ancient Venetian palazzo, Ca' d'Zan, on the edge

⁵ Parks, Arva and Bennett, Bo. *Images of America in Coconut Grove*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2010.

⁶ Polk, R.L. R.L. Polk and Company's Miami City Directory. Jacksonville, Florida: R.L. Polk and Company, 1917-1944.

⁷ Morrison, William. *The Work of Dwight James Baum*. Acanthus Press, New York, 2008.

of Sarasota Bay.”⁸ (See Figure 7) Baum partnered with builder Owen Burns and opened a Florida office acting as both an architect and developer and received many prominent commissions. It is said that “Sarasota has the largest concentration of buildings designed by Dwight James Baum.”⁹

Baum is a prominent architect, winning two prestigious awards, one a gold medal from the Architectural League of New York in 1923 – the youngest architect to ever receive this prize at the age of thirty-seven and after only eight years in practice. The other award was presented to Baum by President Hoover in 1931 for his winning design by Better Homes in America and juried by the American Institute of Architects for the best two-story house built in the United States between 1926 and 1930.¹⁰

During the building boom of the early 1920s, Baum was hired by Miss Elizabeth Slade to design her new residence in Coconut Grove.¹¹ Baum adapted his prize winning “better home” for his client. The original “better home” (Figure 6) is located within the Fieldstone development in the Bronx at 4521 Delafield Avenue. Described as “a direct approach to the problem through simple means and the skillful handling of proportions, resulting in a house combining dignity and a homelike character”¹² by Frederick L. Ackerman, the then chairman of the American Institute of Architects. The home, originally owned by Dr. Francis Collins, was designed in the Colonial Revival style, with Georgian details and wood clapboard siding. The home for Miss Slade was adapted from this design with influences of the Mediterranean style and adapted to suit the south Florida climate.

George and Klara Farkas

With the longest tenure in the house, George and Klara Farkas – he had successful careers in Architecture, Interior Design, and Industrial Design, and her in Photography, and were notable figures within Coconut Grove and in South Florida. The pair were married in 1933 and immigrated from Budapest, Hungary, first to London in 1937, then to New York in 1939 to exhibit in the World’s Fair, and finally to south Florida in 1940. In 1946 they purchased their long time residence at 3547 St. Gaudens Road where they resided with their two children, Tom and Georgette.

Klara was born on December 2, 1910 and studied piano at the Royal Academy of Music. Shortly thereafter she was married to George, she turned to

⁸ Morrison, William. *The Work of Dwight James Baum*. Acanthus Press, New York, 2008.

⁹ Morrison, William. *The Work of Dwight James Baum*. Acanthus Press, New York, 2008.

¹⁰ Architects’ Society Makes Home Award, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 28, 1932

¹¹ Cottage Guests are Now Starting North, *The Miami News*, March 16, 1923.

¹² Architects’ Society Makes Home Award, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 28, 1932

photography as her artistic mode of choice as well as to assist her husband in recording his interior and industrial design and architecture projects. Once settled in Coconut Grove, she became an active member in the community. She was also involved in numerous organizations including the League of Women Voters, Miami Art Museum, Wolfsonian, Fairchild Tropical Garden, The Kampong and was involved in creating the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami. Through her activism, Klara collaborated with Alice Wainwright to create a bike trail in Coconut Grove. The trail, now named the Commodore Trail, runs along Main Highway and Douglas Road, then heads north.

Klara had her dark room inside the house on St. Gaudens Road in a room just off the kitchen and referred to the whole outdoors as her studio. As a well-known and talented photographer in her own right, “her earliest reputation was based on her talent with natural light”¹³. She specialized in portraiture, but also buildings, interiors, and landscape while working alongside her husband photographing his designs.

She taught photography at the Grove House School of Arts and Crafts, a “non-profit progressive school, dedicated to the development of the individual to his highest potential, to the newest methods of instruction and to the cultural enrichment of the community, through its educational facilities”¹⁴. Within a pamphlet for the school, it advertises two photography classes taught by Klara Farkas – one for women and one for men. The Women’s only course was aimed to teach the student to “create through her lens an awareness of the environment of a child”¹⁵ and the men’s course included field trips with an “emphasis on sports and nature”¹⁶.

Throughout the years while living in Coconut Grove, she photographed many important figures in the local community and visitors to Miami. An exhibition at the Woman’s Club of Coconut Grove featured portraits by Klara Farkas entitled, “Ten Women of Coconut Grove” (Figure 10), and included photographs of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, a local Environmentalist, and Alice Wainwright, the first woman Commissioner in Miami. This exhibit is now on permanent display at the Miami-Dade Public Library.

Later in life, Klara’s eyesight diminished due to macular degeneration and glaucoma. Even with this impediment she learned to continue her career as a photographer, producing new and creative pieces. Klara’s contribution to

¹³ Kohen, Helen L., “Photographer Klara Farkas chronicled a half-century of culture, art and architecture

¹⁴ “Grove House School of Arts and Crafts” Pamphlet. 3496 Main Highway, Coconut Grove, Florida. n.d. Print.

¹⁵ “Grove House School of Arts and Crafts” Pamphlet. 3496 Main Highway, Coconut Grove, Florida. n.d. Print.

¹⁶ “Grove House School of Arts and Crafts” Pamphlet. 3496 Main Highway, Coconut Grove, Florida. n.d. Print.

Coconut Grove and the larger Miami arts community is one that can be treasured and remains through her collection of beautiful photographs.

George was born in 1905 and grew up in Budapest, Hungary. He attended the *Academie des Beaux Arts* in Budapest to study architecture and interior design, and then the *Academy for Industrial Design* in Vienna. He was recognized as both an architect, an interior designer, and also as an industrial designer creating furniture and fabric patterns. Prior to moving to Miami, George had an impressive career throughout Europe, where he “designed and decorated bars and gaming rooms in Monte Carlo, country homes in London, airplanes in Berlin, yachts on the Riviera, and exhibited interiors in Paris”¹⁷.

When he first arrived in the Miami area, he was commissioned to design a modern furniture building (later a bank) called Modernage on Lincoln and Alton roads in Miami Beach. Shortly thereafter he then opened his own design firm on Miami Beach. In 1957, he moved his business to Coral Gables and opened under a new name, Plan International, Ltd. where he served as the President of the company and Klara served as both the Vice-President and “A-1” photographer.¹⁸ Their office was located at 3200 Ponce de Leon Boulevard in Coral Gables with services including industrial design, interior planning, and structural, electrical, and mechanical engineering. Behind the structure, a sculpture garden was designed by George Farkas, to be “comparable to the Museum of Modern Art in New York”¹⁹ and was open to the public.

“There is hardly anything he has not designed from kitchen utensils to airports, furniture, lamps, houses, offices, schools, students’ clubs’, recreation projects, government buildings”²⁰

Mr. Farkas was inspired by Miami, incorporating many of the natural elements found within South Florida in combination with vibrant tropical colors. As described in a newspaper article entitled, “Sea Flowers, Corals, Shells Advised For Decorating Room”²¹ there were several ways in which Mr. Farkas was inspired by Miami. One such way, for example is “beautiful keystone – found only here – when combined with wood, makes a most unusual furniture piece”²².

¹⁷ Sea Flowers, Corals, Shells Advised for Decorating Room. *The Miami News*, February 23, 1941

¹⁸ Bower, Nellie, Added Culture for The ‘City Beautiful’ Sculpture Garden Started in Coral Gables, *The Miami News*, Sunday, January 5, 1958.

¹⁹ Bower, Nellie, Added Culture for The ‘City Beautiful’ Sculpture Garden Started in Coral Gables, *The Miami News*, Sunday, January 5, 1958.

²⁰ Bristol, Julia. Dozen Originals Are Created For Airport Terminal. *The Miami News*, February 9, 1959

²¹ Sea Flowers, Corals, Shells Advised for Decorating Room. *The Miami News*, February 23, 1941

²² Sea Flowers, Corals, Shells Advised for Decorating Room. *The Miami News*, February 23, 1941

One instance where George applied his usage of tropical elements was to an original fabric design for Howard Johnson restaurants. Famous for their ice cream bars, Farkas created a fabric for Howard Johnson by combing images of tropical fruits and ice cream sundaes (Figure 13) – using “a gray green background with peach, yellow, brown, and strawberry”²³. This pattern, which according to a 1948 newspaper article could “make you drool at the mouth,” was to be applied to all of the southern stores.

Mr. Farkas designed the interior of the Miami Airport's International Terminal where this influence of nature is evident in his work, particularly in the fabrics. Often, Mr. and Mrs. Farkas would collaborate in the creation of designs, Klara through the use of photography and George through his design sensibilities. One of the primary designs within the terminal was for the draperies that were modeled after scaffolding. Klara photographed various angles of the scaffolding that was used during the construction of the new Miami Airport and then George “studied the photographs, experimented with them, eliminated excess lines. The result was the creation of an original and truly contemporary fabric design”²⁴ that has been mass produced as a fabric by F. Schumacher & Co. and into a wallpaper by Katzenback & Warren, Inc. (Figure 12)

He also worked with Robert Law Weed and Marion Manley on the University of Miami Master Plan in the late 1940s. The buildings at the University's campus were of a “radical, modern design” that were “so aptly modified to the sub-tropics”²⁵. Farkas was primarily responsible for the interiors, and he designed the furniture and fabrics in both the student club and dormitories. The furniture was both practical and beautiful, maximizing space and functionality. Within the lounge, semi-circular sofas were paired with circular coffee table to match the curve. (Figure 14 and 15) In the dormitory rooms, Farkas combined a desk and headboard into a singular triangular piece. Over 10,000 pieces were created, all constructed of solid wood, to furnish these spaces at the University. Accenting the rooms were the upholsteries and draperies, introducing a myriad of tropical colors into each space including yellow, tangerine, chartreuse, terracotta, as well as various floral patterns.

George Farkas lived in Miami from 1940 until his death in 1961, making an impressive contribution to the design community in South Florida. His furniture and fabric designs were progressive and radical, and are outstanding examples of the period in which he was creating.

²³ Streate, Jan. A Fabric is Born in Miami. *The Miami News*. December 14, 1948.

²⁴ Bristol, Julia. Dozen Originals Are Created For Airport Terminal. *The Miami News*, February 9, 1959

²⁵ No Other School Has Club Like University of Miami. *The Miami News*. October 23, 1948.

III- Description

Architectural Description

3547 St. Gaudens Road is modeled after Dwight James Baum's award winning "better home" design. The home in which the design is based on was designed in the Colonial Style with Georgian details. The modified version that can be seen at 3547 St. Gaudens Road exhibits influences of both of these styles, but also that of the Mediterranean Style with the use of textured stuccoed walls, pink in color, and barrel tiled roofing.

The front façade is almost symmetrical in design has a central wooden entry door with a Georgian style stone surround. Above the entryway is a Juliette balcony with French doors and an extension of the stone surround. Divided lite casement windows flank the central entry, accented by blue wooden shutters. The shutters each have an "S" shape carved at the top, possibly symbolizing the "S" in Slade, the original owner of the property.

To the left of the central façade is a small shed roofed extension that is connected to a flat roofed storage area, bridged by an open air walkway and a cottage style gate. To the right of the central façade is a two story extension containing an archway with an open air porch on the first level and a partially enclosed porch on the second floor, encased by exterior wooden plantation shutters.

IV- Application of Criteria for Designation

The Farkas Residence at 3547 St. Gaudens Road possesses quality and character through its architectural design, historical associations with Coconut Grove, and represents a work of master architects, Dwight J. Baum. The property is eligible for designation under the following criteria as numbered in Section 23-4(a) contained in Chapter 23 of the City Code:

- (1) *Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past;*

George and Klara Farkas were important members of the Coconut Grove community, contributing to the arts and the preservation of the natural environment as both activists and creators.

- (2) *Exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community;*

The early development of Coconut Grove, particularly the subdivision of lots in the southern portion of the area, can be attributed to the Sunshine Fruits Company. As an early real estate firm, the Sunshine Fruits Company was active during a time of extreme transformation -- the development boom of the early 1920s -- turning what was once fruit groves into an active residential and commercial community.

- (5) *Embody those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction;*

The architect, Dwight James Baum, adapted his prize winning "better home" for the residence at 3547 St. Gaudens Road. The home exhibits influences of both the Colonial and Georgian Styles, but also that of the Mediterranean Style with the use of textured stuccoed walls and barrel tiled roofing.

- (6) *Are an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder;*

Dwight James Baum is an award winning architect who practiced primarily in the Greater New York City region and within Sarasota, Florida.

V- PLANNING CONTEXT

The home is located on St. Gaudens Road, a street that is heavily landscaped with large trees creating an overarching canopy.

It is located within both a High Probability Archeological Conservation Area and Environmental Preservation District (EP-70).

Contributing Structures and Landscape Features

There is one contributing structure on the site, the two story residence described in the preceding text, of which all facades shall be subject to review.

Any future development at the site should also take into consideration the lush tree canopy created by the existing landscape features, both along the right-of-way and on the property. These landscape features are subject to requirements set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

VI- BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VII- Photographs



Figure 1: Tax Card Photo, City of Miami



Figure 2: Front Façade



Figure 3: Front Façade (west side)



Figure 4: Front Façade (east side)

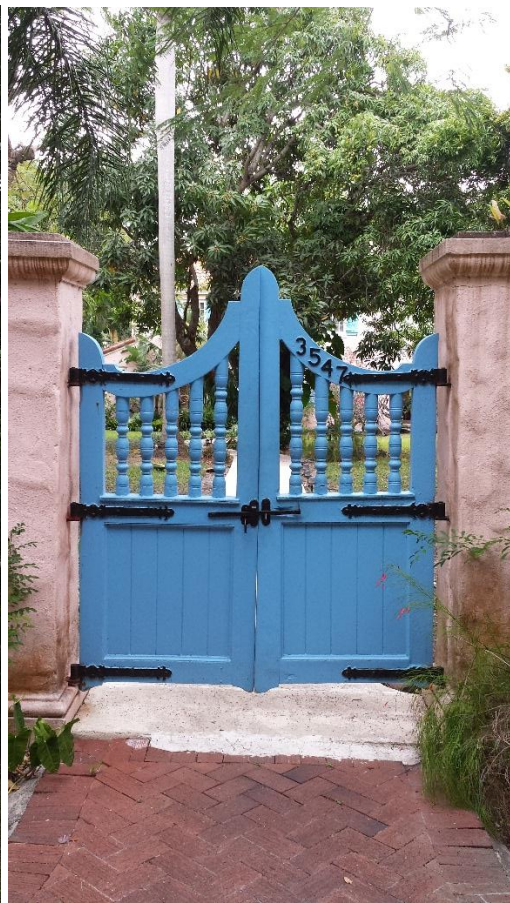


Figure 5: Front walkway entry gate



Figure 6: Architect Dwight James Baum's "Better Home"

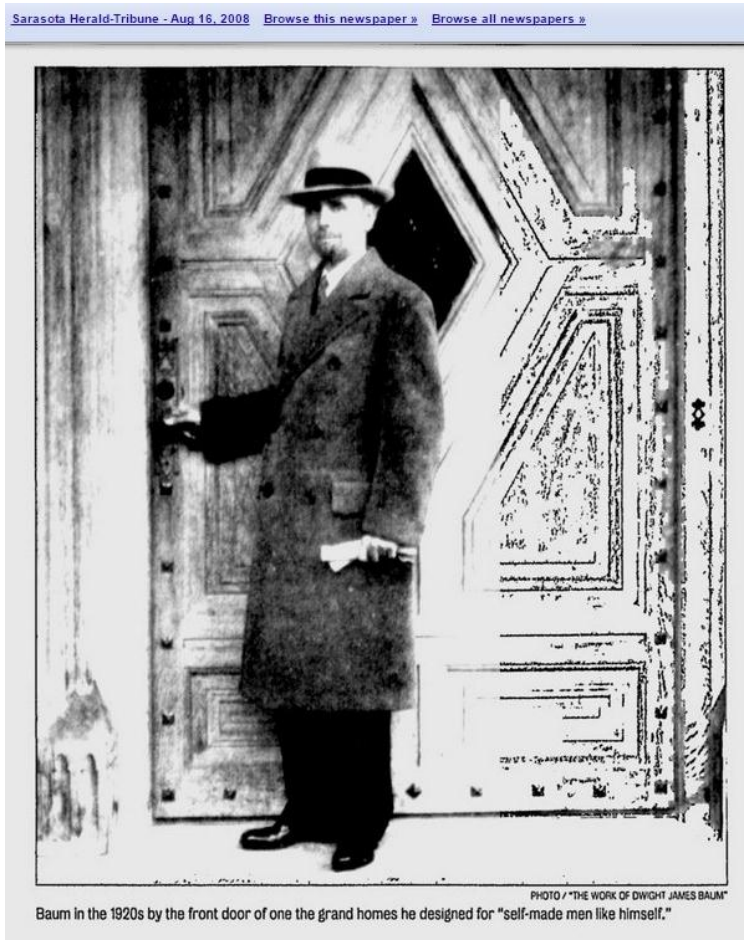


Figure 7: Architect Dwight James Baum in front of Ca'd'Zan (Now known as The Ringling Museum of Art)



SOMETHING FOR ALL THE FAMILY — Picked at random as a typical Greater Miami family, Mr. and Mrs. George Farkas and their two lovely children today were given a preview of the features in tomorrow's Miami Sunday News. Little Tommy, 3, and Georgette, 5, did what every other healthy youngster does — they grabbed the funnies. Mrs. Farkas, without hesitation, opened the paper to the woman's section, saying: "The Miami Daily and Sunday News has more news for women than any other paper I've ever read." And Farkas,

Miami Daily News Photo by Hamilton himself, did what thousands of others are going to do tomorrow: he dove right into the famous nationally circulated THIS WEEK Magazine — which beginning tomorrow, will be part of every issue of The Miami Sunday News. Farkas, an interior designer with studios at 954 41st st., Miami Beach, who has lived and worked at his art in London, Budapest and New York, came here nine years ago. The Farkas family lives at 3547 St. Gaudens, Coconut Grove.

Figure 8: Farkas Family

INTERESTING WOMAN

She's An Artist With A Camera

By BILLIE O'DAY

Klara Farkas' dark room comes in handy for something besides photography.

"It's a perfect retreat when my son 'Tommy, 15' starts practicing on his drums," says the blue-eyed brunette good-naturedly.

Born in Budapest, Klara Farkas has found her artistic niche here in Miami.

Since 1932 she's been giving one-man shows of her photographs in galleries and art centers once reserved for regular painting exhibitions.



Figure 9: Klara Farkas, featured in The Miami News, July 21, 1961



Marjory Stoneman Douglas
Environmentalist and Author of *The Everglades: River of Grass*



Alice Wainwright
Attorney and First Woman Commissioner of Miami

Figure 10: Photos featured in "Ten Women of Coconut Grove" at the Woman's Club of Coconut Grove by Klara Farkas.

Four From The Grove

In the new edition of "Who's Who in American Art," Coconut Grove has made its name as an artistic neighborhood. There are four Grove residents listed among the leaders of the art world.

Those listed in the new edition are VIRGIL BARKER, art critic, writer and professor at the University of Miami, in-



RICHARD MERRICK



GEORGE FARKAS



RALPH HAMILTON HUMES



VIRGIL BARKER

dustrial designer, GEORGE FARKAS, sculptor, RALPH HAMILTON HUMES and RICHARD MERRICK, painter, also a professor at the University of Miami.

Figure 11: George Farkas, featured in "Who's Who in American Art", The Miami News, January 10, 1954.

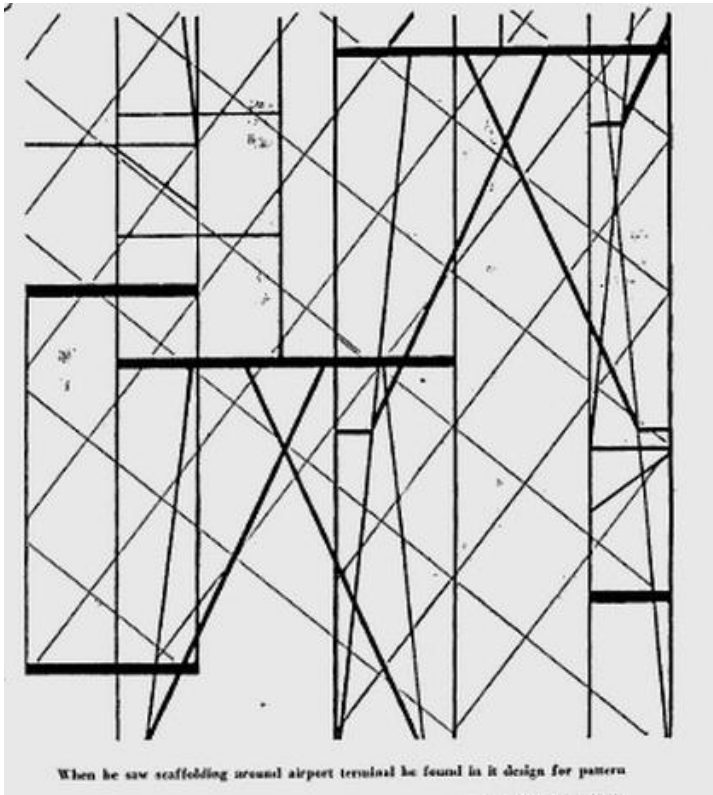


Figure 12: "Scaffolding" fabric pattern used in the Miami Airport Terminal designed by George Farkas

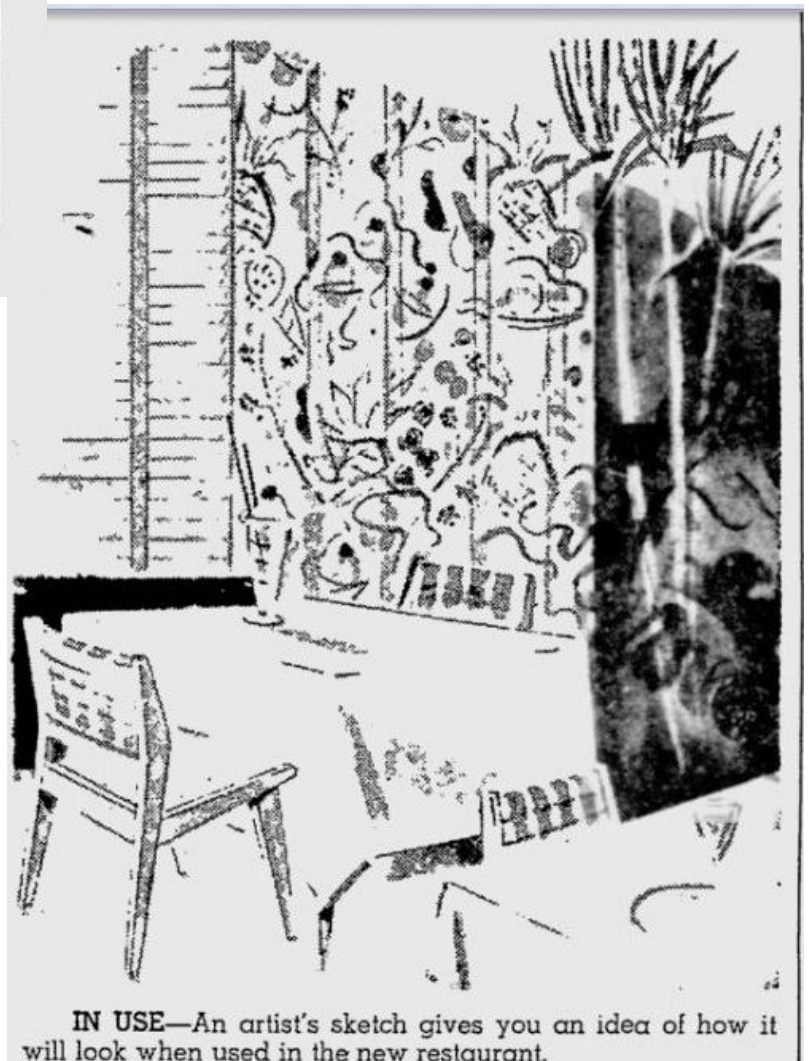


Figure 13: "Tropicana" fabric pattern used in Howard Johnson restaurants



Figure 14: University of Miami Lounge



Figure 15: University of Miami Lounge